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ABSTRACT

Summarized in this report is a study designed to explore the interrelationships that develop over time between two of the most important aspects of people's lives: their work and their families. Specifically, the study focuses on how the nature of women's jobs influences the system of nuclear family relationships and affects parents' involvement with their children's schools. Conducted over a period of 2 years, the investigation included two phases. In the first phase, subjects studied were 15 dual-earner families in which the mother was working in one of three types of jobs within a large telephone company. The second phase included 15 dual-earner families in which women worked in "non-expert" jobs in three large banks in a Texas city. The jobs of women in these respective phases clearly differed in (1) the amount of autonomy given on the job, (2) the overall salary levels associated with the jobs, and (3) the degree of flexibility employers granted for short-term leave (e.g., sick and personal leave). Findings, collected from three in-depth interviews (two with the working women and one with their husbands), are discussed in terms of general sample characteristics, general work conditions of women, work and family histories, and work and family interrelatedness. (MP)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE FINAL REPORT

WORKING PARENTS PROJECT

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January 1983

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DIVISION OF FAMILY, SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY STUDIES
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INTRODUCTION

The research to be summarized explores the interrelationships that develop over time between two of the most important aspects of people's lives: their work and their families. The research was stimulated by a growing concern with working mothers as a social phenomenon; we therefore aimed to study families in which both parents are working full-time outside the home.

Smith (1979) reports that between 1890 and 1978, the female labor force participation rate (percent of women sixteen or older who are employed or looking for work) grew from 18% to near 50%; the sharpest sustained increase in women's participation in the labor force has occurred in the last few decades. Smith estimates that nearly fifteen million women have joined the labor force between 1947 and 1978. These new workers were mostly married women, since single and divorced women have always worked for wages outside the home in larger numbers.

The increasing proportion and absolute numbers of mothers working for wages outside the home have tremendous social and economic implications for, among other things, child care, education, work schedules and transportation.

The research was designed to expand the theoretical underpinnings of most research on "dual-earner" or "two paycheck" families and to begin to fill in important gaps in the data. We proposed to accomplish the former by: (1) looking at parents'/workers' views about concrete aspects of their jobs--such as worker autonomy/style of supervision, in addition to salary and benefits; (2) examining how these features of work experience influence family lives of workers, in particular women's view of this; (3) including the entire nuclear family system of relationships, in particular parental roles, in the analysis of the family, rather than focusing exclusively on the marital relationship; and (4) assuming that work and family influences are reciprocal, and therefore should be studied as they are developed over time.

METHOD

In order to help fill important gaps in the research literature on dual-earner families, the sample was designed to include 30 families where both husband and wife were employed full-time, and the women had no more than a high school education and were not working in jobs classified

as managerial or "professional." Equal numbers of Anglo, Black and Mexican American families were selected.

The research method used was qualitative--meaning the primary data is in-depth, open-ended interviews with respondents; the analysis is therefore based on the research staff's judgments of patterns in the interviews, and our interpretations of these patterns, rather than on the establishment of statistical relationships between variables. It is also inductive research--meaning that a minimum number of assumptions and hypotheses were formed in advance of the study, but rather the hypotheses and theoretical implications were developed from the interviews, the data itself, and therefore the analytical framework shifted somewhat as a result of relationships observed.

The study was conducted over two years, referred to as "Phases" within the body of the report. The 15 Phase I families have mothers who work in three types of jobs within a large telephone company. The jobs are "craft" jobs, a larger category of jobs within the company which are unionized, non-supervisory jobs. These three types of jobs require no formal education beyond high school and are office jobs. The 15 Phase II families include women who work in "non-exempt" jobs in banks. These are office jobs which do not require beyond a high school education, and are strictly defined as jobs which qualify for (are not exempt from) overtime pay, unlike management/"officers". Unlike the telephone company jobs which were represented by the Communications Workers of America, the bank jobs are non-unionized. All jobs held by women in the sample are "women's jobs" in that they are generally occupied by women and are generally thought of as such.

Three in-depth interviews, generally an hour and a half in length, were conducted with each family, usually in their home; two with the mother and one with the father. In addition, the Work Environment Scale and the Family Environment Scale (Moos and others, 1974) were completed by each spouse independently. Interviews were transcribed and coded to generate a set of categories for analysis.

There are enough differences between the two types of workplaces selected, as will be discussed in detail later, to permit the exploration of how some aspects of jobs hereinafter referred to as "workplace policies," influence family life. Evidence has also been gathered on how

internal family dynamics have affected, over time, the working careers and decisions of men and women in the sample.

Jobs Sampled

The 30 families included in this study all had full-time working mothers and fathers and dependent children living at home. All but two had at least one elementary school-aged child. They were all nuclear family households; in only one case was there an additional relative living temporarily in the home. The families were selected through the mother's place of employment. The women's jobs represented in each Phase and their distribution by ethnic groups are listed in Table 1.

TABLE 1

JOBS SAMPLED: PHASES I AND II

Employer	Jobs by Level of Pay, Complexity of Tasks, and Responsibility:	Anglo	Mexican American	Black	Total
TELEPHONE COMPANY JOBS	High Level:				
	Marketing Representative Service Representative	2	2	2	6
	Medium Level:				
	Senior Stenographer	1	1	-	2
	Entry Level:				
	Service Order Writer Telephone Operator	2	2	3	7
THREE BANKS' JOBS	High Level:				
	Assistant, Loan Dept. Secretary to V.P. Technician, Accounting	4	1	-	5
	Medium Level:				
	Clerk in Deposits Clerk in Wire Transfer Lobby Teller Unit Supervisor	1	2	1	4
	Entry Level:*				
	Clerk, Various Depts. Machine Operators Mail Collections	-	2	4	6

* In the banks, unlike the phone company, employees can be hired at any level; these jobs are equivalent to entry level in the phone company.

Jobs are evenly distributed by level among the ethnic groups in the Phase I phone company sample. That is not the case for women employed in the banks, where Anglo women sampled tended to be in higher level jobs, while minorities tended to occupy the entry level jobs. We do not have data on the number or placement of minority female employees in the bank jobs from which we sampled. Therefore, this underrepresentation of minorities in the middle and top level non-exempt jobs in our sample may not reflect such underrepresentation with the particular banks sampled. Certainly, we

received refusals to participate from minority females in higher level positions. Nevertheless, the tendency for minority females to be overrepresented in lower level jobs is consistent with U. S. labor market figures in general (United States Commission on Civil Rights, November 1982).

The women interviewed in Phase I of the study had been working for the phone company from two to 16 years. The median length of service was ten years, and the median length of service in their present classification was six years.

In contrast to the phone company women, the women at the banks had been in their present jobs for no more than four years; nine had been in their jobs for two years or less. The longest time that anybody in the sample had worked at a bank continously was nine years, most of it spent in relatively low level clerical jobs. There was a disparity in the level of the jobs and salaries of the women sampled. Anglo women tended to be in higher level secretarial positions or in positions dealing face to face with the public, while the minority women tended to have lower level jobs, dealing either with machines, documents or people on the phone.

Women's Work Histories

All but two of the phone company women were in their early 30's. They had, for the most part, been working outside the home steadily for over ten years, often since before graduating from high school. With few exceptions, these women had worked full-time outside the home throughout their married lives, leaving the labor force only for maternity leaves of around six months or less. These families, then, had developed while depending on both parents' income and while facing the difficulties of running a household, caring for and socializing children, and providing for the needs of two full-time members of the labor force. Most of the Phase II bank women had tended, over the years of their working life, to leave the labor market for one to three-year periods for what can be referred to as family-related reasons. The most common specific reasons were: (1) a husband's transfer to a different town, state, or even country; (2) the birth of a child, in two cases a sickly or handicapped child; and (3) in two cases unhappiness with child care arrangements. The minority females tended to have held lower-paying, lower-status jobs than the Anglo females throughout their work careers previous to their bank employment.

Husbands' Occupations

The husbands' jobs in the Phase I sample included: two managers with 15 or more people under them, one educational consultant, one business consultant, two supervisors with less than 15 people under them, one self-employed small businessman, two members of the Armed Forces, two civil service clerks, and four skilled craftsmen.

The husbands' jobs in the Phase II sample included: two operations managers (second in line) in large department stores, one electronics technician, one self-employed small businessman, one supervisor in a privately-operated mental health institution, two law enforcement agents, two career non-commissioned officers in the Armed Forces, three skilled craftsmen, and three warehouse/stock clerks.

The Families

The great majority of individuals and couples in the sample are originally from Texas and most have lived most of their adult lives in the state and in the city. Of the five families that included an out-of-state member, four had been brought to the city by military transfers, including the only two families in which both spouses were from out of state. Among most of the couples, at least one spouse--and often both--had been raised in a small town.

Twenty-five of the thirty couples had been married between eight and sixteen years, with a median of about eleven years. The number of children ranged from one to four. Five families had one child, thirteen had two children, ten had three, and only two families had four. There were no systematic differences between phases or among the three ethnic groups in the genders of the children; there were overall more boys (41 boys to 29 girls), although there were more Phase II families than Phase I families whose oldest child was a teenager (6 families versus 1).

Education and Income

The educational attainment of the women and men of the samples are presented in Table 2. Although none of the women's jobs required education beyond high school, 14 women reported some additional education, mostly in business colleges or junior/community colleges. More men reported college education, including baccalaureate degrees as well as business and junior/community college education.

Overall, Phase I families had higher income levels than those In Phase II, even though their incomes are reported in 1980 dollars. Were these

TABLE 2

EDUCATIONAL LEVELS OF WOMEN AND MEN

Sample	Level	WOMEN			MEN		
		Anglo	Mex-Amer.	Black	Anglo	Mex-Amer.	Black
Telephone Company Families (N=15)	High School Diploma Only	2	2	1	2	1	1
	Some College*	3	3	3	2	-	4
	College Degree**	-	-	1	1	4	-
Banks Families (N=15)	High School Diploma Only	3	4	4	1	1	3
	Some College*	2	1	1	3	4	1
	College Degree**	-	-	-	1	-	1

* Primarily Business and Community/Junior Colleges
** Four-year Baccalaureate degree or higher

figures adjusted for inflation, the real difference in buying power would show even more dramatically. These figures are presented in Table 3. Men had not only had more schooling than women, but also tended to have larger individual incomes. The importance of the women's contribution to the total family income is clear in the data presented in Table 2. Individual annual income for the women ranged from $9,000 to $21,000 with a median of $16,000 for the phone company workers, and from $8,000 to $16,000 with a median of $12,000 for the bank workers. For the men, it ranged from $12,000 to $36,000 with a median of $18,000 for the Phase I sample, and from $9,000 to $35,000 with a median of $15,000 for the husbands in the Phase II sample.

TABLE 3

COMBINED ANNUAL FAMILY INCOME IN THOUSANDS

AND WIVES' CONTRIBUTION IN PERCENTAGES

	Anglo	Mexican American	Black
Phone Company Families*	36.8	35.6	36.4
Banks Families**	39.8	29.6	25.8
Phone Company Wives	43.2%	51.0%	44.0%
Banks Wives	38.0%	41.6%	41.0%

* In 1980 Dollars
** In 1981 Dollars

Work Conditions of Women

We found substantial differences between the working conditions encoutered by most of the women in Phase I telephone company employees and those of Phase II bank employees. The main contrasts were: (1) an overall management style which leaves the jobs in the phone company with little autonomy (i.e., control over the organization, pacing, and/or content of one's work) and places high pressure on the occupants of these jobs to perform certain tasks in the shortest time possible in a manner prescribed in advance. The bank jobs, on the other hand, are less structured and provide workers with greater autonomy. (2) Leave policies, in particular short term, personal and sick leave policies, were perceived by phone company employees as inadequate or inflexible, which often created problems for their families; most bank employees, on the other hand, found the policies for short term leave as administered by their supervisors to be more flexible and therefore more accommodating to daily demands of personal and family life. (3) Work schedules varied more among phone company employees. Some jobs, in particular Operators, require adjustment to various shifts. In general, the more desirable schedules can be obtained through seniority or through transfer to fixed schedule jobs, such as Service Representative. The bank employees also in general reported having experienced greater flexibility with arrival time, thus making allowances for special needs such as leaving children at sitters or Day Care. All bank jobs had regular day schedules. (4) Finally, the overall wage levels were significantly higher for phone company employees. Both employers provide benefits packages which are highly valued by employees and their families; for the phone company these benefits are negotiated periodically by the union.

FINDINGS

Work and Family Interrelatedness

Because of the complexity of the data from the interviews--even after the interviews had been coded--the accompanying tables were constructed as tools to aid in the analysis.

Phase I sample data are presented in Table 4 and Phase II sample data are presented in Table 5. Within these tables, the individual families (rows) have been placed according to ethnic background (A = Anglo; MA = Mexican American; B = Black) and given numbers within these groups from 1 to 5. Data recorded in these tables separately for each phase include:

TABLE 4

SUMMARY TABLE OF SELECTED PHASE I FAMILY RESPONSES AND WORKPLACE CONDITIONS

	PHASE I	Share Image	Should Mother Be Home M	Should Mother Be Home F	Husband Share Tasks	Children Share Tasks	Type Family Response	Flexible Short term Leave M	Flexible Short term Leave F	Work Schedules M	Work Schedules F	Believe Father Authority with Kids	Who involved in School	Level of Parental Involvement in School
A	1	No	Yes	No	No	1	C.C.	No	No	Same (Regular)		No	Both	Low
	2	Yes	No	No	Yes	3	T	No	Yes	Same (Regular)		No	Both	High
	3	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	1	Tran	No	Yes	Same (Regular)		Yes	Father	Low
	4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	1	T	No	Yes	Complementary (Split shift)		Yes	Both	--
	5	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	1	A.F.	No	No		Part time	No	Mother	High
MA	1	Yes	No	No	Yes	1	C.C.	No	Yes		Irregular	No	Father	High
	2	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	3	A.F.	No	Yes		Long hours	Yes	Mother	Low
	3	Yes	No	No	Yes	3	T	No	Yes	Same (Regular)		No	Both	Med
	4	Yes	No	No	Yes	1	T	No	Yes	Over-time		No	Both	Low
	5	Yes	No	No	Yes	1	T	No	Yes	Complementary Short-late		Yes	Both	Med
B	1	No	No	Yes	No	2	A.F./ C.	No	No	Same (Regular)		No	Mother	Low
	2	No	Yes	No	No	1	A.F.	No	No		Part-time	Yes	Mother	Med
	3	Yes	No	No	Yes	1	C.C.	No	No		Long hrs. Irregular	Yes	Mother	Low
	4	No	No	Yes	No	1	A.F./ C	No	No		Part-time	Yes	Mother	--
	5	Yes	No	No	Yes	3	T	No	No	Same (Regular)		No	Mother	Med

CC	Child Centered Family
T	Togetherness Family
TRAN	Transition Family
A F	Absent Father Family
C	Conflict Family

1980 Family where Wife works at Telephone Co.

TABLE 5

SUMMARY TABLE OF SELECTED PHASE II FAMILY RESPONSES AND WORKPLACE CONDITIONS

	PHASE II	Share Image	Should Mother Be Home M	Should Mother Be Home F	Husband Share Tasks	Children Share Tasks	Type Family Response	Flexible Short term Leave M	Flexible Short term Leave F	Work Schedules M	Work Schedules F	Believe Father Authority with Kids	Who Involved in School	Level of Parental Involvement in School
A	1	Yes	No	No	Yes	2	T	Yes	Yes		Rotating shifts	Yes	Mother	Low
	2	Yes	No	No	No	3	T	Yes	No		Part time	Yes	Mother	High
	3	Yes	No	No	Yes	2	T	Yes	Yes		Night school	Yes	Mother	Med
	4	Yes	No	No	Yes	2	T	Yes	Yes	Overtime		No	Both	Med
	5	Yes	No	No	Yes	2	T	Yes	No			No	Both	High
MA	1	Yes	No	No	No	3	T	Yes	Yes	Same (Regular)		Yes	Both	Low
	2	Yes	No	No	No	3	T	Yes	No	Same (Regular)		Yes	Both	Med
	3	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	2	Tran	No	Yes	Same (Regular)		No	Both	Med
	4	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	1	Tran	Yes	Yes	Same (Regular)		Yes	Both	Low
	5	No	No	No	No	3	Tran	Yes	No		Overtime	Yes	Mother	High
B	1	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	2	T	Yes	Yes		Night shift	No	Both	High
	2	Yes	No	No	No	1	A.F.	Yes	No		Part-time jobs	No	Mother	Med
	3	Yes	No	No	No	1	T	No	Yes	Same (Regular)		Yes	Both	Low
	4	Yes	No	No	No	2	C	No	Yes		Long hrs. Irregular	Yes	Father	High
	5	No	No	No	No	2	C	No	Yes	Same (Regular)		Yes	Mother	Med

CC | Child Centered Family
T | Togetherness Family
TRAN | Transition Family
A F | Absent Father Family
C | Conflict Family

($) 1981 Family where Wife works at Bank

(1) researchers' judgments about certain features related to family organization; (2) reports from mothers and fathers about their jobs' flexibility for taking hours or days off for family related reasons ("Flexible Short Term Leave"); (3) information about the types of work schedules of both husband and wife; (4) researchers' judgments about certain aspects of parental roles.

Family Image

A concept called the "image of the ideal family," or "the family image," emerged from the early stage of analysis. This image refers to the assumptions about a desirable family life that underlie much of what participants in the study strive for, worry about and argue over. It does not usually emerge in the interviews as an abstract ideal explicitly described by parents. Rather, based upon our examination of the interviews, we have inferred these images from the goals and standards by which spouses and parents appear to judge themselves and each other in their everyday decisions and discussions.

This insight led to a systematic review of the pertinent segments of each family's interviews. We examined transcribed data from each family in a search of the nature of the underlying family image. After looking at the interviews with husband and wife, we categorized each family according to whether spouses seemed to share a similar image or to have divergent images. The specific contents varied from family to family, but the two most central issues seemed to be (1) whether or not they felt strongly that the mother should stay home with the children, and (2) how much time they felt both parents, particularly the father, should spend with his children and in family activities generally.

Type of Family Response

The column labeled "Type of Family Response," represents staff's judgments about major family organization features which emerged as important themes in the interviews with both spouses. They are intended only as shorthand descriptive statements about aspects of the nuclear family configuration which appear to predominate as characterizations of each family's adaptation to its dual-earner status at the time of the interviews.

(T) "Togetherness" is used when respondents described themselves as close families and mentioned that both parents and children participate in a majority of recreational and/or housework activities. (CC) "Child-

centered" families indicates that the parents' relationships with their children were judged to be of greater significance to family life and cohesion than the marital relationship. (C) "Conflict" families are those judged to be characterized by major conflicts between parents and sometimes children over basic issues such as task sharing, time spent by one or both parents with the family, and whether or not a mother should be working. In these families the conflicts appeared for the moment to be unresolved, and there was no indication of an agreed-upon compromise or direction for change accepted by both spouses. (TRANS) "Transition" families are those in which a major alteration in both spouses' views of family roles or relationships was occurring when the parents were interviewed. Several of these families had had major conflicts in the past, and in order to resolve them had sought outside help or support. The planned changes were inevitably in the direction of egalitarian task sharing by both parents. (A.F.) "Absent Father" families are those where fathers were virtually absent from most of family life, either because of extra jobs, greater involvement in their jobs, or simply social/emotional isolation from participation in most of the shared activities. In some cases this was accepted (outwardly at least) by the mother, and in others it had led to great conflict between parents.

Parental Roles

The category representing the beliefs about paternal authority (cultural dimension) emerged as a category of interest because so many parents spontaneously mentioned that the father was stricter with the children, or in some way implied that the children paid more attention to his discipline than to their mother's. Some illustrative statements include:

Father A: To me, the father has to be the disciplinarian, children have got to fear him if they do something wrong, they have to dread their father finding out about it, or else they keep doing it if they don't dread their father.

Mother B: Their daddy on the other side is a little bit more stricter and less understanding. I'll listen to them first because lots of times you'll accuse them of something and they didn't really do it. Or it wasn't their fault. And I try to see their side also.
(How come they mind him more?)
I guess he yells at them to clean the house right. And they probably know he's going to whip them.

Because so many parents spontaneously made these statements, this widespread distinction between "mothers'" and fathers'" relationship with children was considered to be a cultural dimension of parental roles, representing traditional views of these roles.

The parental participation in monitoring children's progress and other school activities was explored during the interviews with mothers and fathers in both phases of the research. On the basis of the responses to specific probes and the spontaneous relation of incidents with teachers and schools, judgments were made by the researchers about the participation/non-participation of each parent, and about the intensity of that participation. For each family, transcript examination and coded responses were used to determine if the mother, father or both had the major responsibility for communicating with schools, dealing with problems that arise, attending parent-teacher conferences and PTA meetings, and participating in other school functions. The judgments of the intensity of participation were based on the same data.

Comparison of Phase I and Phase II Samples

At the end of the first major stage of analysis based on Phase I interviews, it was observed that in families where the "image of the family" was shared between spouses, the husbands tended to participate significantly in the household or child care tasks. The components of the family image which were most often reported to be in contention had to do with whether the mother and/or father's job was detracting from the children's or the family's well-being. It appeared that agreement between the spouses on the importance of time spent with the children and in other joint family activities facilitated the work-sharing behavior of parents.

This agreement appeared to have been achieved between eleven out of the fifteen couples interviewed during Phase I, and in nine out of those eleven cases husbands were judged to "share tasks" in the home. In the four couples where a major disagreement on family image was apparent, none of the husbands shared household tasks to a significant degree, as can be observed by examining Table 4.

With the addition of the Phase II sample of families with mothers working for a different kind of company, and with generally different work histories, these same associations did not appear to hold as consistently. In the Phase II sample even more of the couples were judged to share the

family image (13 out of 15), yet of these only four husbands were judged to share household/child care tasks to a significant degree. In fact, these were the only husbands in all 15 Phase II families who were judged to do so, as compared to nine husbands overall in the Phase I sample.

A comparison between the overall patterns in "type of family response" between Phase I and Phase II reveals that what we have labeled "Togetherness" (T) characterized nine Phase II families in contrast to six Phase I families. If the families labeled "Transition" (TRANS) are included--because they were judged to be consciously working towards change in the direction of greater agreement and cohesion--then the contrast between Phase I and Phase II is sharper (Phase I, 7 families out of 15 compared to Phase II, 12 families out of 15). Five Phase I families were characterized as "Absent Father" families, compared to only one family with this label in Phase II.

It seems a fair generalization to say that overall, more Phase II (bank) families described themselves as more cohesive total families (in terms of emotions and activities) than did Phase I families. This does not mean that any particular set of relationships were described as better by one group compared to the other (i.e., parent-child, spouse, etc.). Rather, (nuclear) family relationships overall were assessed as more "together" by more Phase II parents. Spouses' relationships were balanced with parent/child relationships, and fewer strains or conflicts were described within this network.

A togetherness response was not consistently associated with a significant participation of the father in traditionally gender-stereotyped tasks of housework and child care. It should be noted, however, that in the families labeled as "Transitional" (TRANS) in Phase II (3 Mexican American families), the change included greater father participation in child care duties, and in three of four Phase II families labeled "Togetherness" (T) but "No" on "Husband Shares Tasks," the children's level of participation in the housework was rated at the highest level. These patterns do tend to support the association between significant work sharing among some family members (besides the mother), in the home, and the assessment by spouses of an atmosphere of "togetherness" in their family life.

Leave Policies

We intended for the major difference between the two phases of the study to be the employer of the women. However, it is important to consider the policies of the women's employers as they interact with those of their husbands' employers in order to get a full picture of the kinds of constraints and opportunities their policies offer to the workers and their families. The interviews and the Work Environment Scale scores provide evidence of the generally lower level of autonomy (and related higher pressure) for the female telephone company employees as compared to the female bank employees. Although we view this autonomy as a part of a broader aspect of management style, an important concrete manifestation of this autonomy was the degree of flexibility in short term leave policies/ practices.

The column labeled "Flexible Short Term Leave" on Tables 4 and 5 provides judgments of the flexibility of these leaves for both mothers (M) and fathers (F). It can be seen that none of the telephone company women reported flexible leave, while eleven of the fifteen bank employees reported that they were able to take short leave without penalty. Among the men, eight of the husbands of phone company employees reported flexible leave policies in their jobs, compared to 10 of the husbands of bank employees. More significantly, in the Phase I sample there are seven families in which both mother and father had jobs offering no flexibility in short term leave policy. In comparison, none of the bank families were in this situation, and in six of the 15 Phase II families both the wife and the husband reported flexible leave policies in their current jobs.

Parental Involvement in Schools and Leave Policies

Judgments about which parent was most involved with their children's schools and judgments about the level of parental involvement are recorded in the final two columns of Tables 4 and 5. Of the 14 families who reported that both spouses were equally responsible for keeping up with the schools, six were phone company families and eight were bank families. All three fathers who reported having the major responsibility for school involvement were married to women whose jobs had rigid leave policies--two in the phone company and one in a bank.

When neither parent had flexible leave policies, which was the case in six families (all of them phone company families), it was the wife who would somehow find the time to assume that responsibility. Fourteen out of

17 fathers with flexible jobs were involved at some level in their children's schooling. However, only two of the 13 fathers whose jobs had rigid leave policies were involved in their children's schooling. Mothers, on the other hand, showed a much greater commitment, either out of conviction or tradition. All 11 mothers whose jobs had flexible leave policies were involved with their children's schools, but in addition, 16 of 19 mothers with rigid leave policies still managed to find the time to maintain some involvement.

When, in addition to who was involved, the intensity or level of that involvement was taken into account, bank families tended to be more involved with their children's schools. To the extent that this involvement is linked to leave policies, this difference would seem to be related to the differences in flexibility of the women's leave policies, since there were no differences between Phase I and Phase II men who have flexible leave policies in their jobs. Five of the eight families who reported high levels of involvement were bank families, while only four of the ten families judged to have a low involvement in their children's schooling were bank employee families.

The relationships which we have observed to exist between their employers' short term leave policies and the parents' reports of the degree of their involvement in their children's schools are not sufficient, in themselves, to establish a direct link between the policies and parental activities. Indeed, by suggesting that the relationships differ for men and women, we have indicated one clear way in which family role dynamics might interact with workplace policies and thus mediate their direct impact.

It is difficult for us to rule out differences in the interests, values, or personal priorities as explanations for the differences in trends in type and degree of parental involvement in the schools for Phase I and Phase II families. Most of the Phase II women have left the labor force more often and for longer periods of time for family-related reasons than the majority of Phase I women. It is not clear from the interviews whether this fairly striking contrast in work histories indicates (1) a greater willingness on the part of Phase II parents to sacrifice increased income for other family goals, such as more time spent with children; (2) a lower sense of job opportunity on the part of some Phase II parents, particularly the minorities; (3) a decrease in the financial value to the

latter families of uninterrupted employment for the mothers due to their lower paying jobs; (4) or (what is most likely) some combination of all these factors. Whatever the differences, there are no data from the interviews to indicate that Phase I parents tend to be less concerned about their children's education than Phase II parents. On the other hand, there are compelling reasons to link the tendency for less intense involvement of Phase I parents in schools to the greater rigidity of those mothers' employers' short-term leave policies, coupled with the effects of the greater stress they report experiencing in their work. The pressure--emotional and organizational--placed on the female telephone company employees by their inability to influence the organization and pacing of their work, and by the difficulty of getting time off for short periods for personal/family reasons, according to their own reports, often influence the network of relationships in their homes. These women reported more often than the female bank employees that they were irritable at home, that they lacked patience with their children and spouses. They also reported, overall, greater guilt about their supposed lack of patience, and they reported feelings of inadequacy as parents more often than did the women from the Phase II sample.

The emotional stress of their work also placed greater demands on their family members to help them find ways to release the tension built up during the day. And the rigidity of short term leave policies, in particular, in many cases had forced these women's husbands to take greater roles in the care of the home and/or children. This had particularly influenced fathers with job flexibility both to spend more time driving children to and from school, doctors and day care and to take a more active role in communicating with the children's teachers. In part, this fact, and the fact that so many of the female telephone company employees had remained--with few interruptions--in the labor force, and with the same company for so long, may contribute to the greater number of Phase I husbands reporting significant participation in the traditionally female, gender-stereotyped work around the home, as compared to Phase II husbands. This increase in responsibility for fathers was less frequent among the female bank employees, particularly in those cases where the mother had moved in and out of the labor force. It appears that the moves back into the home for mothers, whether full-time or part-time, tend to break up the pressures building for fathers and/or children to take on more of the

burden of work in the home.

While we have suggested that workplace policies may offer constraints or opportunities to parents in their family activities, there are examples of areas of family dynamics which appear to affect all families and which indicate the ways in which such dynamics mediate any direct impact of employer policies on family roles.

Gender Roles and Family Dynamics

The interviews with men and women also provide interesting examples of the ways in which gender roles (in both the cultural and behavioral senses of the term) appear to affect family activities and relationships independently of the working conditions/employer policies of either spouse. One of the patterns we have noted earlier--the consistently greater likelihood for mothers to be more involved with children's schools than fathers--continued to exist despite the differences in workplace policies. In fact, rigid leave policies appear to have had a more discouraging effect on fathers' participation than on mothers'.

Two important general points emerge from this observation. The first is that while it is important to look at the kinds of jobs women have in order to see the effects of their employment on the family, the jobs of husbands have an equally important influence on family roles. This has both theoretical and practical implications. Were employers to assume that greater flexibility in leave policies is strictly a concern of female employees, and to grant this flexibility only to females, this might have little impact on relieving the strain on family relationships. As we have suggested, employer rigidity discouraged the samples' fathers from involvement with the schools more than it discouraged mothers. The result of policies allowing only women flexibility might be, in effect, to further discourage fathers from realizing their full parental roles.

The second general point is that there are aspects of parental roles which--while influenced by the jobs of men and women--nevertheless persist somewhat independently of those influences. These aspects are linked to gender roles. This is illustrated by the samples' mothers' continuing greater involvement with children's schools, even when faced with greater job pressures and constraints. This pattern is reflected as well in the overall persistence of housework and child care as ultimately the responsibility of mothers/wives, even taking into account the greater variation in the degree of involvement in such work on the part of husbands

and children. In addition, we have classified the families according to whether at least one spouse asserted this view of the father as the main authority figure. Since this belief is central to the "traditional" patriarchal view of parental roles, we attempted to determine if there was an association between this belief and other features of workplaces or of family organization. We found no such patterns. No clear pattern links this belief to the strength of spouses' views about the importance of a mother staying at home with the children, nor to any particular type of Family Responses. This suggests that the persistence of some traditional patriarchal views of parental roles occurs independently of other aspects of response and adaptation to the realities of the dual-earner situation.

Interrelatedness of Husbands' and Wives' Work Career Patterns

The husbands of the telephone company workers tended to have stayed with the same company and within the same work career pattern more steadily than the husbands of the bank employees; this fact tends to parallel work patterns of the wives. Also, telephone company women had more often supported their families while their husbands continued their education in order to enhance the husbands' earning capacity. Furthermore, the plans of ten telephone company husbands to start their own businesses--compared to only two bank husbands--were in part made possible by their wives' reliable and substantial earnings. In fact, there is clear evidence among the sample families that one spouse in a couple tended to encourage the other to find or keep jobs of comparable status or income potential as his or her own.

The second element most important to a shared image of the ideal family--in addition to whether the mother's working outside the home was accepted--was whether or not the father was spending too much time and/or energy in his work relative to time spent with the family. In all but one of the families labeled "Conflict" (C) in both samples, a significant element of the conflict was the father's overinvestment in his work or jobs, either through psychological involvement and time, or simply through extra time put into work in part-time or full-time jobs.

In several cases where spouses had, or were currently having, strong conflict about the family image, the wives/mothers had envisioned a greater emotional and daily involvement of the fathers with their children and with the family as a whole than actually existed. In at least three of these families, the fathers expressed the view that their provider role should be

sufficient, or at least was the one with which they felt the most comfortable. Here are comments from a father who had been an "absent father," although he had changed his career direction drastically in order to limit its demands on him and to save his marriage. He was, when interviewed, more involved with his family but continued to stress the provider role, even though his wife has a good job with good prospects for the future.

> As far as the working three jobs, I think...due to the history of my being gone and the history of my wife being the center of the house, you know, the center of the family, the one that the kids went to, you know. And there was not a great need for me here. I think that I probably in my own mind feel that I perform a greater service by bringing home a larger paycheck in supporting them.

Although these kinds of emphases on the primacy of the provider role for the father were extreme within the sample--and were expressed by a minority of respondents--they inevitably were associated with relatively high levels of reported conflict between spouses and sometimes between parents and children. In all families which reported having considered divorce, the fathers greatly stressed the importance of their provider role at the expense of other aspects of parental duties.

In two families where the father had attempted to enhance the family income through taking on an extra job or business, he and his wife appeared to have agreed that this was appropriate. But even though the spouses were judged to agree on "the family image" in this sense, both wives had responded to the absence of their husbands by becoming overwhelmed with the duties of housework, parenting, and job (both were telephone company employees). One woman said:

> I know I need to be stricter on them than I am, but being away from them so much I hate to just stay on them. I guess I would have to say that I just flat give in to them too much because of my job. I mean, I don't like being away from them so much, and therefore I'm not strict enough in a lot of things.

It is revealing to examine the contrasts between fathers' interpretations of their role in these "father absent" and "conflict" families and fathers' responses in "togetherness" families. Among the latter, there were two general patterns evident in the interviews. The fathers in "togetherness" families appeared to have generally reached some kind of balance in the emphasis they placed on their job and career and on their participation in family life. In several cases this meant that they (1)

had turned down or quit jobs which made excessive demands on their time and energy, or (2) that they had simply adjusted their career ambitions to a point where their jobs or careers were not of greater importance to them than their families, or at least were not in direct conflict with them.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

By examining the work and family histories of the thirty married couples in our sample we have concluded that many of the assumptions, implicit or explicit, which appear often in the literature on working mothers, dual-earner or dual-paycheck families, effects of working mothers on children, etc., must be ferreted out and carefully considered to determine their continuing usefulness.

First and foremost to require reexamination is the continuing emphasis on effects of working or employed mothers, which rightly implies that the fact of mothers' employment, the nature of her job and her attitudes toward it, have significant implications for families and children. However, this focus carries the additional and unwarranted implication that the fact of fathers' employment--and the nature of his job and his attitudes toward it--are not equally significant in their impact on families and children.

Among the couples in our sample who are in their mid 20's to mid 30's and among whom both parents have been working outside the home fairly steadily for the duration of their married lives, it has been impossible for us to separate the "effects" of one spouse's job from the "effects" of the other's job. Indeed, we have found evidence throughout our interviews of connections between the job choices and career decisions, job levels, salary levels, and attitudes towards jobs and careers of wives and their husbands. Spouses tended to indicate similar levels of involvement in their work, although women--particularly telephone company employees--overall tended to indicate less satisfaction with their jobs than their husbands. In cases where either the husband or wife was more involved with their job/career than their spouse, either the more involved spouse encouraged the other to increase their involvement with their own career, or there was a greater likelihood that higher levels of conflict in family relations would be reported by spouses.

The interdependence of spouses' jobs and career decisions included the common occurrence of a wife leaving the labor force temporarily as the result of a husband's job-related transfer, thereby retarding her own advancement within a company or work career. The majority of these

sacrifices of one's own job advancement to accommodate that of a spouse were made by women (although they were seldom described by respondents as "sacrifices"). It was commonly assumed by both men and women in the sample, that men's identities were more tied to their jobs and to their responsibilities as providers, while women's were in some basic way more tied to the family and childrearing. However, in our interviews with parents, we also observed an association among several indicators of the degree of cohesiveness or "togetherness" in nuclear family relationships and work sharing patterns, with statements by both spouses that their spouse and parental roles are at least of equal importance to their family as their work roles. In families which we judged as "togetherness" in emotional tone and activity patterns, fathers had often described making decisions at some point in their marriage about their jobs, careers, or work schedules which were strongly influenced either by their own desire to or by other family member's need for them to be available at home. Among those families judged to be in a situation of relatively high conflict, the overemphasis by fathers on their provider roles at the expense of other aspects of their family roles appeared to be either a major cause of conflict, or at least appeared to have increased the stress levels reported by their wives about child rearing, housework, etc.

Our study provides evidence to support recent theories which posit that the greater the similarity of family and work roles between spouses, the greater the marital solidarity (except that in our study we refer to family cohesiveness or togetherness). Oppenheimer's (1977) theory of status compatibility among spouses in their jobs is one such theory. Simpson and England's (1982) theory of "role homophily" is another. Both theories have been advanced in contradiction to earlier theories, particularly Parsons', which assume that marital solidarity is enhanced when spouses' roles are complementary or more "differentiated" from each other.

We have also presented evidence for the importance of studying dual earner families, or more broadly, families of working parents, as a total system of relationships, including parental roles and relationships with children (and although we have not looked at them, relationships among children would also of course be relevant).

We have seen in our interviews clear evidence in the contrasts between phone company women's families and those of bank women, supporting our

original hyupothesis that the nature of mothers' jobs would have an influence on family roles. However, we have concluded that these "effects" can best be understood as taking place over time, and in a reciprocal interaction with spouses' jobs and intra-family dynamics. The evidence in our data support the idea that the women in jobs with low worker autonomy which were also rigidly supervised, experienced greater stress in the home, greater anxiety and doubts about themselves as parents, and tended to report more conflict in their family relationships in general. There is also evidence that the added strains of employers' inflexible or inadequate short term leave policies on families' emotional and time resources can discourage parents from involvement in their children's schools.

As we have stressed earlier, however, family and work histories, and family dynamics (including gender role ideologies) are all mediating factors in the family/work relationship. In noting certain contrasts in the family patterns and work histories of female telephone company employees and the women bank employees of our sample, we confronted the broader questions of whether the workers' perceptions and values regarding their personal and professional lives are shaped by their jobs, or whether people select and remain with jobs which most closely suit their perceptions and values. We have concluded from our evidence that both are true, and that people's choices and priorities for their careers and their families develop and change in interaction with their working experiences and those of their spouses. Furthermore, their "choices" are constrained in very real ways by the realities of the labor market--the different kinds of jobs available for people of different genders, racial/ethnic backgrounds, and the general state of the economy at particular points in their lives.

Virtually all of the women occupied jobs which are "women's jobs," and thereby are a part of what has been termed the "secondary labor market" of lower-paying and less secure jobs reserved for women and for minority males. This points to the necessity to broaden the framework of analysis to include the structure of the job market and the differences in the availability of jobs for men, women, and minorities.

Our data suggests that minority females in both Phases showed greater tolerance of the negative aspects of their current jobs because of a sense of narrower opportunities and choices. In Phase I, they expressed a more positive assessment of the opportunities provided for their children and

families by their relatively high salaries. In Phase II, there was a tendency for the Mexican American and Black females to feel privileged to be working in banks, even though their salaries and jobs tended toward the lower end of the continuum of Phase II jobs. The limited job opportunities available to women in general, to women with only a high school diploma, and particularly to minority women, are widely recognized in popular and scholarly literature. Even as this report is being prepared, a research report by the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, appointed by President Reagan, reveals that "Blacks, Hispanics, and women are unemployed and underemployed in disproportionate numbers to white males." The Commission concludes that since these differences remain at virtually all educational background and age categories, "we must strongly suspect that discrimination continues to be a factor. We have been unable to find any other explanation for these persistent disparities" (United States Commission on Civil Rights, 1982).

The effects of discrimination are evident in the lowered expectations or the sense of a "job ceiling" by women overall, by minority women most especially, and by minority males as well. The effects appear to be cumulative in this sample. That is, at each stage of the sampled women's work career and the domestic cycle, decisions or opportunities had been influenced by earlier decisions and opportunities (or lack of opportunities), as were perceptions of one's job and overall situation.

Our research suggests that the spouse of an employee and her/his family as a whole develop a sense of what are acceptable or "normal" levels of stress, acceptable or "necessary" levels of income, and so forth. This may explain how in the Phase II families, in particular the minority families, the emphasis on the importance of the wives' incomes to the family was not as great as in Phase I families, even though their salaries were much lower than those of phone company women. This also, in part, may have provided a way for these workers and their families to adjust over time to workplace policies which may have been having a detrimental effect on them. For example, although Phase I women reported much higher job pressure and frustration than their husbands, and also higher levels of impatience and nervousness at home, they and their husbands tended to explain their supposed greater lack of patience as due to gender differences or idiosyncratic personality differences between the women and their husbands. Part of the women's adaptation to their jobs had been to

lose a sense of, or avoid openly acknowledging, the extent of the negative influence of the job on themselves and/or their family relationships.

We have paid less attention to the implications of salaries and benefits, beyond noting that they are of great--if apparently unequal--importance to all workers in the sample. Obviously, their importance to the phone company workers themselves, and to their families, made it worth the sacrifices involved in adapting to the rigid supervisory style. The combination of a sense of job security, high wages, good benefits, and other general advantages of union representation had apparently contributed to the more stable work histories of the telephone company employees in our sample, and to their sense of greater commitment to stay with their employer. The relatively less stable work histories of the current bank employees in our sample--particularly for those in the lower level jobs--and their less certain commitment to remain with their current employer were in part tied to the absence of the sense of job security, lower wages, and lack of clear procedures and possibilities for advancement.

Research on dual-earner families, in particular, but family research in general, would do well to attend to the larger labor market and economic realities influencing the attitudes and decisions which men and women today make about their work careers and their family roles; these are intertwined for men and women through a process of reciprocal influences over the course of their work careers and family cycle. Neither one can be completely understood without taking into account the other. These connections are not always seen by parents themselves, and in fact, not seeing them may be one form of their attempts to adapt to the often conflicting demands of jobs and family, or to cope with feelings of guilt due to difficult choices which have been made as a result of such conflicting demands.

Family therapists and those interested in occupational health and safety need to consider this lack of awareness of the effects of jobs on relationships within the home on the part of women or men. To attribute the differential effects of job pressures to gender or personality differences, appeared to have enhanced the pressure phone company women (or their spouses) placed on themselves, rather than relieve it. Employers and personnel managers, as well as union officials and labor activists, need to recognize the importance the broader implications for families of the

choices and constraints which their policies impose on their workers. We feel that our data, along with those of other researchers (notably and most recently articles in Aldous, 1982) are beginning to provide concrete information about the ways in which leaves, scheduling, style of supervision, procedures and opportunities for advancement for women and minorities can influence the opportunities for parents and their children to work out satisfactory home lives together.

Our interviews with both women and men indicate that job satisfaction and involvement are tied very closely to a sense of some control over the organization and pacing of one's work, a style of supervision which allows feelings of responsibility to grow and develop, and the conveyance of a sense of opportunities to expand in knowledge and/or experience into new areas of company operations. Although we have not focused on the implications of this observation for the productivity levels of workers, the relationship is a logical one, and one which future research in the area of family and work will undoubtedly continue to explore.

Suffice it to say that a simple focus on salaries and benefits to the exclusion of other aspects of work organization, supervision, and leave policies--or vice versa--will provide neither employers nor labor with a full program for lowering turnover rates, increasing company loyalty, or increasing workers' satisfaction and productivity.

School administrators and personnel have an interest in the enhancement of working parents' ability to devote time and energy to helping their children through the educational process. An important part of that process is parental involvement in schools. Our interviews provide evidence that in dual-earner families where both parents are employed full-time, employers' rigid short-term leave policies tend to discourage parents' higher levels of school involvement and, in particular, such policies tend to discourage <u>fathers</u>' involvement even more than mothers'.

Indications are clear that employers, unions, and school personnel, among others, must recognize the important role that changes in <u>their</u> policies and plans can play in relieving the increased burden of stress and responsibility on working parents today. On the other hand, these same officials should also broaden their understanding of the ways in which their own operations can be improved through paying attention to the needs of working parents, and through increased cooperation in planning between schools, unions, employers, and organizations representing parents.

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